

VZCZCXRO2288  
PP RUEHDT RUEHHM  
DE RUEHCHI #0068 1020826  
ZNR UUUUU ZZH  
P 120826Z APR 07  
FM AMCONSUL CHIANG MAI  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 0445  
INFO RUEHZS/ASSOCIATION OF SOUTHEAST ASIAN NATIONS  
RUEHBK/AMEMBASSY BANGKOK PRIORITY 0693  
RUEHCHI/AMCONSUL CHIANG MAI PRIORITY 0489  
RHHJJPI/PACOM IDHS HONOLULU HI

UNCLAS CHIANG MAI 000068

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PINS](#) [TH](#)

SUBJECT: MILITARY SOURCES EXPRESS CONFIDENCE IN POLITICAL CONTROL

¶1. (SBU) Summary. While keeping a close watch for any Thai Rak Thai (TRT) resurgence, military officers in the northern region are confident that the new constitution will pass in a public referendum and the TRT party will be disbanded. Former northern army head Gen Saprang Kalayanamitra, now Assistant Secretary General of the Council for National Security (CNS), is

SIPDIS

likely out of the running for Army Commander as a result of the same tough military style that won him admiration when he was directing his remarks against then-Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra. End summary

¶2. (SBU) During a visit to Chiang Mai for a counter-narcotics meeting April 3-4, Defense Minister Gen Boonrot Somthat and 3rd Army chief Lt Gen Jiradet Kotcharat told a senior Office of Narcotics Control Board (ONCB) official that Thaksin and TRT pose little threat and that the political situation is under control. Much more worrisome, they said, is the situation in the south, which they believe will need at least five years to set straight.

¶3. (SBU) The two generals expressed confidence that the new constitution will pass and that subsequent elections will not bring a return of Thaksin or his nominees. Boonrot told the ONCB official that TRT is certain to be disbanded around the end of May by a Constitutional Court ruling and that the Assets Scrutiny Committee will finish off Thaksin.

¶4. (SBU) The ONCB source noted that the latest army reshuffles in the north, including command changes in the 32nd, 33rd Military Circles and the Military Districts of Chiang Rai, Phayao and Uttaradit, signaled the army's determination to ensure the right political outcome in future elections by closely monitoring the actions and movements of key TRT supporters. As an additional measure to keep the political situation under control, Boonrot and Jiradet pointed to the draft military act, said to be copied from the U.S. Homeland Security Act, which gives the Internal Security Operations Command (ISOC) oversight of all government intelligence work.

¶5. (SBU) Although Gen Saprang Kalayanamitra, who helped instigate the coup from his post in Phitsanulok, predicted during a visit to Chiang Mai earlier this year that he would be made Army Commander, sources say this is now unlikely. Promoted to Assistant Army Commander after the coup and subsequently appointed chairman of the board of two major corporations - Telephones of Thailand (TOT) and Airports of Thailand (AOT) -- Saprang has since tarnished his reputation with an expensive junket to Europe and a series of hawkish statements. The once-popular general now has trouble on both sides: anti-coup groups charge Saprang with abuse of power while his military colleagues worry that the outspoken general could exacerbate

problems in the south and widen the internal rift within the armed forces.

CAMP